

STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

April 13, 1977

Dr. Eugene Garfield  
Director, Institute for Scientific Information  
325 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, Penn. 19106

Dear Gene,

I am enclosing a copy of a product announcement that just came across my desk: The Holofile.

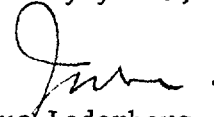
I don't know anything about this particular technology beyond what appears in the enclosure, but what they have to say appears to be entirely plausible. In digital format, each card should be able to encompass about a thousand pages of SCI text. I don't know exactly what they mean about the capabilities of the terminal, but if not now, it won't be very long before fairly low cost equipment will indeed be able to search fairly rapidly - let's say a few minutes per card - through such a file. That number is probably quite conservative and might be improved from minutes to seconds with special purpose technology.

It occurred to me that we have to keep our mind open about this option for the distribution of ISI's products. The brochure doesn't say what these terminals will cost, but whatever the present price, this is bound to go down rapidly and even now, if it is the range of several thousand dollars, it may have to be considered as a competitor for the printed page.

This kind of distribution will of course be competitive with on-line access, and I suppose it won't be too long before there are better working examples (there are a few shaky prototypes) of this kind of memory technology in support of information retrieval systems accessed on-line. More concretely, I wondered if this might not be the time to start looking into, for example, a joint venture with Holofile, with respect to the marketing on a lease basis of access to information files like the SCI. This is a different wrinkle from what Lockheed has started and might give ISI and opening to the electronic media for information products in a way that the others have not begun to preempt.

I cannot tell from the brochure what "low cost terminal" really means, but it should not be too difficult to find this out.

Sincerely yours,

  
Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics